(e) whether they would carry WLL phones, enabling people to make as well as received calls on nominal charges;

(f) if so, the details of the proposed steps taken in this regard; and

(g) whether the postmen would be paid special allowance for handling mobile telephones?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (g) The Government have worked out a pilot project of WLL based telephones to be provided to Grameen Dak Sevaks on an experimental basis. The programme envisages carrying of these telephones by the Grameen Dak Sevaks to the villages for villagers to utilize the facility for making calls. A component of all charges will be payable to the Grameen Dak Sevaks as a commission. The programme does not in anyway involve any revamping of Department of Posts, since the role of Department of Posts will only be to collect the revenues on behalf of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for which BSNL will pay them a commission.

Telephone Exchange in Aligarh

†899. SHRI B.P. SINGHAL: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMALTION TECHNOLOGY be pleased be state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had set up a new Telephone Exchange at Nangla Birkhu, Tehsil Iglas, Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh) in January, 2002;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the machine costing lacs of rupees is lying defunct and the telephone connections released by this exchange are out of order resulting into the loss of lacs of rupees to Government; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to run this telephone exchange smoothly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Yes, Sir. A 256 Port C-DOT exchange was installed in March 2002.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) No, Sir. The exchange is locally working satisfactorily. However, 30 Channel Radio Media is faulty and is expected to be rectified shortly.

(c) It is planned to replace the existing media with Optical Fiber Cable by March, 2003.

Shortage of Manpower in Department of Posts

900. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is shortage of staff in the Department of Posts throughout the country;

(b) if so, the number of vacancies in each State, State-wise and category-wise;

(c) whether any selection or recruitment programme was made for this department on National or State level; and

(d) if so, when the last recruitment was made for the same in each State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) There is no general shortage of staff though there are vacancies in circles arising from time to time due to promotion, resignation, retirement, death etc. of the incumbents.

(b) The details are given in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) The selection/recruitment is made at the National/Circle/Divisional level, depending upon the Group to which selection/recruitment is made.

(d) Filling of the vacancies by direct recruitment and by promotion is an on-going exercise. Promotional vacancies are filled up as and when these vacancies arise. According to the existing instructions, direct recruitment vacancies can be filled up to the extent of 1/3rd of the direct recruitment of vacancies arising in the year subject to a further ceiling that this does not exceed 1% of the total sanctioned strength of the Department. Action is in progress to fill up the direct recruitment vacancies relating to the years 2000 and 2001 in all Circles/States. The Annual Direct Recruitment Plan for the year 2002 is under preparation.